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TOP SECRETCOPY NO. 27FSB D-45  
June 29, 1953PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D. C.INTERIM U.S. PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY PLAN FOR EXPLOITATION  
OF UNREST IN SATELLITE EUROPE  
(NSC Action 817-e)1. Problem

To assess the significance of recent signs of unrest in the European satellites of the USSR, particularly in the so-called German People's Republic, to estimate U.S. psychological capabilities for influencing the situation, and to develop a realistic program of coordinated U.S. psychological operations to exploit rapidly existing opportunities for furthering U.S. and Free World objectives in the satellite states of Europe, while laying the foundations for more ambitious programs in the future if events should warrant them.

2. The Situation

A dramatic new element has been introduced into the European situation by the current wave of unrest in satellite Europe. Popular discontent over Communist oppression has flared into open defiance of Communist authority in Czechoslovakia, where workers' demonstrations of a violence and temerity hitherto unknown in the satellite states broke out early this month. Though these riots appear to have been triggered by resentment over monetary reforms, in Pilsen, at least, they had broader implications. There, by the admission of the governmental press, an angry mob trampled on the Soviet flag and hoisted the American one. Minor acts of resistance have been reported elsewhere in Czechoslovakia and in Rumania. For some time, there has been unrest in Albania, and a sober U.S. press observer, after a recent visit to Budapest, compares Hungary to a volcano which could erupt at any time.

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It is in the so-called German Democratic Republic, however, that the most significant and spectacular developments have occurred. The anti-regime demonstrations which began in East Berlin on June 16, and developed the next day into bloody mass rioting, subsequently spread throughout a large part of the Soviet Zone and were frankly characterized by the governmental press and radio as a rebellion. Despite the proclamation of martial law and the deployment of Soviet armed forces in East Berlin and in several parts of the Soviet Zone, calm had not been fully restored six days after the outbreak of the uprisings. Several hundred thousand Germans appear to have participated in the movement. There were widespread strikes. The rioters were mainly workmen, many of them from heavy industry and public utilities. Several strategically important large plants were either destroyed or badly damaged. The communist press has reported what it termed "murderous assaults" on Party officials and police or other state employees, and mob attacks on government offices, jails, Party headquarters and other installations have been noted.

In East Berlin and elsewhere where mass riots occurred, the puppet police appeared to be ineffectual. A number of defections from the Communist police occurred. The pusillanimous behavior of Deputy Minister Otto Nuschke and other puppet officials did not enhance the prestige of the regime. The reenforcement or replacement of East German by Soviet military forces, including tank units, naturally tended to suppress large-scale mob demonstrations but did not immediately cow the rebellious workers. A number of audacious attempts to spike the guns or sabotage the treads of Soviet tanks were reported. Clearly there was no magic even in the most impressive manifestations of Soviet military strength. The tearing-down of the huge Soviet flag that has waved over the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin since the Red Army first entered the city was a symbolic act of great portent.

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The drastic and sweeping Soviet repression, involving thousands of arrests and a number of summary executions, had not broken the spirit of resistance in Eastern Germany a week after the beginning of the uprisings. Official communist statements reported in the Western press on June 22, declared that many of the "fascist provocateurs" alleged to be responsible for the disorders were still at large and admitted that even in factories where work had resumed a number of the workers still exhibited an embittered spirit. Food shortages appear to be aggravating the unrest in Berlin.

Efforts of the East German puppet officials to win over the rebellious population by announcements that workers who were merely misled will not be dealt with harshly, by abject self-criticism which almost certainly foreshadows a sweeping Party purge, and by promises of drastic reform and economic relief, seemingly have been even less successful than the Soviet repression of the rebellion. Though resentment over excessive production quotas, food shortages and hard conditions of life generally triggered off the revolts in Germany as in Czechoslovakia, these grievances were overshadowed by the clearly expressed political objectives of the German rebels. More than anything else the German uprisings appear to have been a kind of spontaneous direct-action plebiscite in which the East German masses voted with their fists for free elections, the reunification of Germany and the withdrawal of Soviet occupation forces.

The repeated mob shouts of "Russki Go Home" and similar slogans gave the uprisings a clear anti-Soviet character from the start, but it would be a mistake to view them as pro-Western. Their essential motivation was nationalist. Unless the Soviets are prepared to come to terms with German nationalism--which seems unlikely--or to adopt savage measures of mass repression, there seems little likelihood that the spirit of resistance in Eastern Germany will abate. On the contrary, the partial victory over

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the puppet government indicated by the promises of reform which have already been wrung from it, is likely to enhance the morale and step up the expectations of the resistance forces. Even if Soviet and satellite authority should succeed in suppressing current unrest and in re-establishing control, it can be assumed that the present demonstrations of overt and active resistance have weakened their grip on the captive populations and that attempts may be renewed, in different areas, to start local strikes, demonstrations or other manifestations of continuing resistance.

At the same time the sweeping concessions which the Kremlin has forced the puppet authorities in Germany to make, or promise, are almost certain to stimulate demands for similar concessions in the other satellites where the Kremlin can less easily afford to grant them. This communist dilemma, plus the indications that popular resentment in all the European satellites is near the boiling point, plus the discrediting of the German puppet regime and the revelation that Soviet power in Eastern Germany has no basis but naked force, plus the demonstration furnished by the German rebels that defiance of Soviet authority is not always equivalent to suicide, adds up to the greatest opportunity for initiating effective policies to help roll back Soviet power that has yet come to light.

We must, of course, bear in mind that popular uprisings in the satellites cannot cope with effective military force. The only counteraction here is other military force which the West will not now use. However, the use of military force by the Soviet to deal with revolt in a satellite state is a confession of major defeat for their policy, and in areas where there is no Soviet military force present, as in Czechoslovakia, popular uprisings may reach a point where the local military force is unwilling to intervene, thus creating a situation in which the Soviet would be forced to cross an international boundary to make its force applicable.

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In certain situations it is conceivable that the Soviet might be reluctant to take this step, especially if it considered there was any danger of the revolutionary infection spreading to its own armed forces.

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